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**ARMS ACQUISITION: AN IMPEDIMENT TO  
ASEAN COLLECTIVE SECURITY**

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**ARMS ACQUISITION: AN IMPEDIMENT TO ASEAN COLLECTIVE SECURITY**

**AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT**

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## ABSTRACT

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TITLE: ARMS ACQUISITION: AN IMPEDIMENT TO ASEAN SECURITY COMMUNITY

DATE: APRIL 2, 1996 PAGES: 27 CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

Collective Security has received much attention among observers of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) because of its unprecedented move in July 1994 to form the ASEAN Regional Forum to discuss security issues. The move is considered a departure from its original charter that precluded discussion on multilateral level on issues related to security or military. Military and security issues are discussed on bilateral level except for those that are related to members of the military agreement known as the Five Power Defence Arrangement consisting of the U.K, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore. Optimists see this departure as a precursor for ASEAN to establish a security community in the South East Asian region, a region considered a potential flash point especially around the Spratlys.

The author examines current arms acquisition by ASEAN nations and traces the reasons for the continuing arms race and tensions among the nations that are fraught with historical conflicts arising from delineation of borders, illegal immigration, fishing rights, border violations and economic competition. Differences in religions, culture and ethnicity have also compounded the problems.

ASEAN however, continues to strive for integration by combining in joint-economic projects, Joint Border Committees, Joint Anti-Piracy and many more activities involving both government and private sectors. The habit of consultation and reaching decisions by consensus are also being practiced by members of ASEAN to achieve greater cooperations and trust among themselves. This has been successful to a great extent. As there are forces of integration there are equally a number of sources that tend to erode ASEAN resilience. The author argues that unilateral arms acquisitions will prevent ASEAN from developing collective security -- at least in the near future.

## **ARMS ACQUISITIONS: AN IMPEDIMENTS TO ASEAN COMMUNITY SECURITY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

ASEAN was formed in 1967 with the goal to promote peace and stability in the South East Asian region through political, economic and cultural cooperations. The Association cautiously steered itself from any form of collective military commitment to avoid aligning itself with the superpowers and their power play in the region. The alliance has undergone various challenges that have threatened to erode its resilience and solidarity which have arisen from differences in culture, religions and different perceptions on security.<sup>1</sup> The secrets of its ability to hold together are a close relationship based on mutual respect and non-interference, frequent consultations and the respect for independence and sovereignty and avoiding issues that are sensitive to the harmony within ASEAN.<sup>2</sup> Since its inception ASEAN has practiced the traditional habit of consultations and decisions have always been through consensus. Some argue that with this attribute ASEAN has the basis for a security community.<sup>3</sup> Issues on collective security has received much attention among observers of ASEAN because of its unprecedented move in July 1994 to form the ASEAN Regional Forum to discuss on security issues. The move is considered a departure from its original charter that precluded multilateral level discussions on issues

related to security or military which are only discussed on bilateral level except among member countries of the Five Power Defence Arrangement consisting of the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore. Optimists see this departure as a precursor for ASEAN to establish a security community in South East Asian region, a region considered a potential flash point especially around the Spratlys.

Meanwhile, arms acquisition by countries of ASEAN has turned into a regional arms race which further compound<sup>s</sup> the problems among the nations that are already fraught with historical conflicts and differences arising from delineation of borders, illegal immigrations, fishing rights, border violations and economic competitions. ASEAN however, continues to strive for integrations by combining in joint-economic projects, Joint-Border Committees, Joint Anti-Piracy and many more activities involving both government and private sectors . The habit of consultation and reaching decisions by consensus practiced by members of ASEAN mentioned earlier, has greatly increased cooperations and trust among themselves. As there are forces of integration there are equally a number of sources that tend to erode ASEAN resilience. The unilateral arms acquisitions in particular, will continue to be a major impediment that prevent ASEAN from developing a collective security community.

## **ASEAN AS A SECURITY COMMUNITY**

Inis L Claude, Jr in his article The Revival of Collective Security described the concept which was championed by President Woodrow Wilson, as the setting up of legal commitments and organizational arrangements designed to guarantee that aggression by any state against another would be effectively resisted by the combined actions of the other members of the multi-state system. Aggression in this case, is deterred by the credible promise of overwhelming collective resistance. The prevention or defeat of aggression would be regarded as the most fundamental interest of every state and all states would therefore accept the solemn obligation to participate in diplomatic, economic or military measures to suppress such behavior. Would ASEAN be able to be politically committed as a military entity to resolve issue of common interests? Not in the near future.

For several reasons, ASEAN must come a long way before it becomes a security community. First, there are vast differences among the ASEAN countries on threat perception. A threat to one country need not necessarily be a threat to another. In the 1970s Malaysia and Indonesia for example regarded China as a threat. Singapore and Thailand on the other hand did not. Only recently Malaysia and Indonesia viewed China as less threatening. Indeed many see their neighbors instead as a possible source of threat. This is

quite understandable given the historical disputes, cultural and religious differences that exist among the ASEAN countries. To begin with, territorial disputes are the vestiges of colonial era and countries in Southeast Asia have been beset with these unresolved territorial problems ever since. Malaysia for example shares common borders with all of her neighbors and has disputes with everyone of them: with the Philippines over Sabah, with Brunie over Limbang, with Singapore over Island of Batu Putih, with Indonesia over islands of Ligitan and Simpandan and with Thailand over the Thai-Malaysia border. ASEAN members tend to mute over the issues to avoid souring the relationships among them. However, avoiding confrontation has not eliminated tensions. Indeed suspicion among countries heightens, especially when there are frequent incidents of border crossing. Malaysia and Thailand, for example are facing continual problems arising from the crossing of borders.<sup>4</sup>

Second, the issue over ten<sup>5</sup> of thousands of illegal immigrants from Indonesia, the Philippines, Burma and Cambodia flooding into Malaysia have caused diplomatic friction from time to time among the countries. Illegal fishing in neighboring national waters is another major irritant that continually caused diplomatic strains.

Third, current weapons acquisitions and counter acquisitions by ASEAN countries has destabilising effect in the relationship among ASEAN countries. Arms acquisitions

has tremendously changed the structure and strike capabilities of all the ASEAN Armed Forces and these however, are perceived by neighbors as threatening.

Fourth, present economic competitions among ASEAN countries tend to erode ASEAN resilience rather than cement it into a cohesive bond. Most of the products from ASEAN countries are similar and as a result, their markets are creating grounds for competition rather than complementing one another. It is no surprise that joint projects within ASEAN have been painfully slow to emerge. For example, a proposal for an ASEAN Free Trade Area probably will be implemented but not for at least 15 years.

On the plus side ASEAN has been successful in implementing economic growth centers. Economic cooperation has necessitated ASEAN to cast aside differences and its success is reflected by the development of economic centers such as Southern Triangle consisting of Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia; the Northern Triangle consisting of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia and the Eastern Triangle consisting of Brunei, Philippines and Malaysia. Thailand has also recently opened <sup>✓</sup> growth centers in the Mekong Delta comprised of China, Thailand and Vietnam. It is evident that ASEAN has earnestly pursued through various approaches to ensure the continued stability in the region, including the formation of an ASEAN Regional Forum to discuss security issues.

ASEAN countries are also beginning to see the advantages of a security community in the terms of political clout as well as a formidable force that could be brought to bear. ASEAN took an unprecedented move to formalize a ASEAN Post ministerial Meeting whereby security issues are discussed. This is a departure from its original charter.<sup>5</sup> This process has evolved to where ASEAN has established a permanent forum to discuss security known as the ASEAN Regional Forum consisting of 18 members including the United States.<sup>6</sup> Optimists hailed this as one of the most important event in the Asia Pacific Region. Could this be the precursor to the formations of a security community? The short answer is no. There are too many differences that exist among the ASEAN countries. And, arms acquisition has greatly compounded the problem as ASEAN countries undergo modernization of the their Armed Forces.

#### **ARMS ACQUISITION**

Modernization of the ASEAN Armed Forces includes the purchase of ships, aircraft, tanks, missiles and command and control facilities for the purpose of supporting the dual-track strategy -- a strategy commonly adopted by most ASEAN countries to achieve regional stability. First, this strategy entails modernization of the Armed Forces with enhanced self-reliance and deterrence capabilities. Second, it continues building self-confidence among ASEAN

countries through various forms, including security dialogues on bilateral and multilateral levels. ASEAN Regional Forum established in July 1994 is one of them.<sup>7</sup> Modernization programs of the Armed Forces undertaken by most ASEAN countries are closely related to attain the above goals. As a result acquisition trends continue to rise resulting in a regional arms race.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, ASEAN countries also seek to achieve self-reliance for their supplies of military hardware. Towards that end, these countries have embarked on the development of defense industries which are supported through the transfer of technology and joint-productions by weapon suppliers.

**Indonesia.** Indonesian Armed Forces has been undergoing modernization since 1984. Her military budget steadily increased from \$1.57 billion in 1991 to \$2.65 billion in 1995.<sup>9</sup> Her recent purchase includes 24 Hawk aircraft from UK, 12 F-16 from the US, 30 warships including corvettes, LST and submarines from Germany and another 2 frigates from the Netherlands as part of Indonesia's 1986 order. Under the Foreign Military Sales Program Indonesia will purchase arms for \$26.2 millions from the US, one of the major weapons suppliers besides France and Germany. However, as the US continues her pressure over issues related to human rights in Timor, Indonesia has increasingly turned to Western and Eastern Europe and Russia for her military

equipments.<sup>10</sup> Indonesia has also been successful in its own aircraft industry creating jobs for more than 15,000 people and likely to increase to as many as 40,000 in the near future in order to enhance her export oriented defense industry. In 1993 alone, Indonesia exported more than \$20 millions of aircraft and aircraft parts. Productions has been steadily increasing since then.

**Singapore.** Singapore, only one quarter the size of the state of Rhode Island, spends an average of 6 percent of the GDP for its military budget. It has an Armed Forces of 54,000 men of whom 83 per cent are conscripts . In 1994 purchase of arms was \$3.01 billions, up from \$1.5 billions in 1991.<sup>11</sup> It included the purchase of 18 F-16s as part of the 37 aircraft she ordered from the US. She has also upgraded forty five F-5Es and A-4s as part of the modernization program. Other purchases include 30 aircraft trainers, combat helicopters and E-2Cs.<sup>12</sup> Currently she has 6 corvettes, 6 missile crafts and 14 inshore patrol vessels. An additional 3 minesweepers will be acquired.<sup>13</sup> She is also planning to purchase submarines in line with her vital interests to keep the sea lines of communications open. Future acquisitions include fighters and ASW aircraft, Minstrel SAMs and a few minesweepers.<sup>14</sup> The proposed weapons acquisition includes Maritime patrol aircraft, a number of submarines, helicopters, patrol crafts,

minesweepers, and E-2C Early Warning Radar.<sup>15</sup> Weapons supplied to Singapore are mainly from the US, China, Germany, France and Western Europe. Russia has tried to join the pack wooing Singapore, known for its prolific taste for weapons.<sup>16</sup> Singapore's defense industries have 46 subsidiaries and employ more than 12,000 civilians, and provides 40 per cent of the Armed Forces requirements. Her arms exports are currently \$1.2 billion and expected to reach \$5 billions by the end of the decade.

**Malaysia.** Malaysian military expenditure in 1995 was \$2.6 billion up from \$1.7 billion in 1991. Most of her weapon supplies come from the US, East Asia, France, UK , and other European and Latin America countries.<sup>17</sup> Malaysian recent purchases include aircraft and ships such as 38 BAe Hawks from the UK, 7 Beech King 200 from Australia, 18 CN 235M from Indonesia, 8 F/A 18s from the US, 18 MiG 29M Fulcrum from Russia, 4 Augusta A109 and 2 Agusta AS 61N1 helicopters from Italy, 10 Sikorsky from US, 165 Assault vessels, 2 frigates from the UK, 1 Landing ship tank and a number of missiles from the US.<sup>18</sup> Her future acquisitions are projected to include attack helicopters, battle tanks either from South Africa or Poland.<sup>19</sup> Malaysian defence industries started in 1990 with the formation of the Malaysian Defense Industries Council. She has also ventured into the aircraft industry with Lockheed

in a joint-production of digital flight data equipment for export.<sup>20</sup> Another joint venture is with Aerospatiale of France for aircraft production including the transfer of technology. Additionally, joint-ventures are being undertaken with Russia, Germany, UK and Australia in both shipbuilding and aerospace industry.<sup>21</sup>

**Thailand.** Thailand miliary expenditures in 1995 were \$3.6 billion up from \$2.4 billion in 1991 for the purchase of 36 jets trainers, 29 helicopters, 2 AWACs, 36 F-16s fighters, 4 frigates, a helicopter carrier and an unspecified number of tanks and missiles.<sup>22</sup> Main weapons suppliers to Thailand are the US, China, Western Europe and Germany. Defence industries in Thailand began on a modest scale in 1969 to produce small arms and artillery ammunition. A great deal of progress has been achieved and now she has embarked on joint ventures with Germany, Italy and China.

**Vietnam.** Presently Vietnam is unable to modernize her 572,000 men Armed Forces because of financial constraints. She is also facing problems in reducing her Armed Forces because the entrenchment would cause social problem.<sup>23</sup> Hence, there has been only little modernization for its Armed forces. Defence expenditures for 1995 were only \$435 millions. However, her economy is improving through trade

liberalization and a market economy which enable her to track along with the rest of ASEAN. Vietnam became a member in August of 1995. Currently weapon systems in Vietnam's Armed Forces are in a poor state. Except for the recent acquisition of 7 SU 27 from Russia, the rest of her military hardware is old and unserviceable.

**Brunei.** Brunei has only 4,400 regulars and 700 reserves in her Armed Forces with military expenditures relatively small -- \$496 million. Brunei's Armed Forces are designed mainly for counter-insurgency, coastal protection and air defense. Her national defense is totally dependent on her allies.<sup>24</sup> Most of the current weapon systems are being supplied by the UK. Brunei's Naval Force were built in Singapore by Vosper and equipped with fast attack craft, armed with Exocet. Her Air Force is equipped with Hawk aircraft armed with AIM-9L Sidewinders procured from the UK.<sup>25</sup>

**IMPLICATIONS.** The unilateral actions by ASEAN countries acquiring weapons for the modernization of their Armed Forces have changed the political, military and economic landscape of the South East Asian region. First, it has given rise to the notion of 'competition' among ASEAN countries.<sup>26</sup> This is amply demonstrated between Malaysia and Singapore, and Malaysia and

Thailand where it heightened distrust and suspicion that further compounded the unresolved territorial issues. Weapons acquisitions and counter acquisitions by these countries are efforts to keep the military balance among them.<sup>27</sup> The same can also be said about Malaysia and the Philippines over the later's claim over Sabah and the Moros irredentists of Southern Philippines. Arms acquisition by most ASEAN countries is clearly driven by competition to 'outgun' the other, which in turn creates a self-fulfilling arms race, increased tensions and erodes trust and confidence among the ASEAN alliance, affecting its resilience.

Second, the newly acquired weapon systems with increased strike capabilities affected not only military balance among the ASEAN countries, it also induced a sense of insecurity compounded by their traditional distrust and suspicion that exist among them. Again, the result would be acquisitions and counter-acquisitions between countries with reasons to distrust neighbors, as they continue in the effort to find a reasonable balance. Since there is no absolute military balance of power between any two countries, the vicious cycle of acquisition and counter acquisitions will continue among the ASEAN countries in the foreseeable future.<sup>28</sup>

On the other hand it can also be argued that arms acquisitions can have a stabilizing effect. Singapore for example, gained the respect of her neighbors because of emphasis on the modernization of her Armed Forces. Militarily weak nations may lead regional destabilization because neighbors may take advantage by taking military action as in the case of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Stability in this case equates to military balance and the continued arms acquisitions manifest the desire to achieve military balance and regional stability. This however may lend itself to what is called the "spiral effect"<sup>29</sup> and unless there is an mechanism to control it could lead to heightened tensions or armed conflicts.

In the case of ASEAN, several mechanism have been established to prevent possible armed conflicts. The ASEAN Concord and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperations signed 1976 requires all members to observe non-interference on domestic issues, respect for independence and sovereignty, renunciation of threat or use of threat and the use of force, and finally the settlement of disputes through peaceful means. All ASEAN countries have religiously abided by the treaty and their traditional habit of consultations and decision by consensus has been the cornerstone of ASEAN relationships. It does not however dampen ASEAN to

continue acquire arms in the name of modernization of their armed forces.

Third, changes in weapons systems and the attendant changes in doctrine also change organizations and their roles with regard to regional stability. In the case of ASEAN countries, they are now more outward looking, especially in term of protecting their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). The convergence of interests in conflict areas such as the Spratly Islands affects the relationship among Malaysia, Philippines and Brunei with each claiming parts of the Spratlys. While armed conflicts among the countries of ASEAN over the Spratly issue may be a remote possibility, it has compounded historic frictions over unresolved territorial conflicts.<sup>30</sup> This will continue to be one of the driving force behind arms acquisition which is clearly demonstrated by the expansion of the naval and air forces of Malaysia. All the other ASEAN countries, except for the Philippines, Vietnam and Brunei have expanded their naval and air arms to safeguard their maritime interests too. The overlapping maritime interests in the EEZ will continue to pose major challenges to ASEAN countries affecting the political, economic and military dimensions.

## **ARMS ACQUISITIONS FOR WHAT?**

Demands for conventional weapons in the Asia-Pacific rose to \$310 billion, outstripping that of the Middle East and making it the largest market for conventional weapon importers in the world. The decline of the Middle East arms trade has been attributed to the fall of oil prices while the corresponding increase in the Asia-Pacific on arms imports has been due to strong economic growth. Much of the imports of conventional weapons in the Asia-Pacific area are from Japan, Korea and Taiwan. Increased weapons acquisitions in the Southeast Asian region are attributed to the countries of the Association of Asian Nations (ASEAN) consisting of Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines, Brunei and Vietnam. The increased trend of weapons acquisitions are influenced by the interplay of issues at the international, regional and domestic level which relate to economics, technology, politics and military doctrine.<sup>31</sup>

**ECONOMIC IMPERATIVES.** An obvious reason for the current acquisitions of weapons by ASEAN countries has been favorable economic growth. Countries with more successful growth have acquired more weapons than those having lesser economic achievement.<sup>32</sup> Flushed with

cash, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia have modernized their Armed Forces from that of counter insurgencies to that of conventional forces.<sup>33</sup> Their challenges are now focused on protection of national borders and natural resources including the Exclusive Economic Zones from external intrusion or aggression.

Arms acquisition are also influenced by the incentives offered by weapon suppliers through their "off-set" programs. These programs could be part of arms deal that has both political and economic incentives. A range of incentives are offered under this scheme including contractual agreement with weapon suppliers to assist in domestic defense industries and the transfer technology to the purchasing country. The off-set program for example has made Singapore and Indonesia successfully create jobs for more than 15,000 men respectively and exported their products overseas.<sup>34</sup> The program is popular among purchasing countries because it allows these countries to develop self-reliance in the supply of military hardware, which is one of the goals for more efficient defence capabilities.

Indonesia has considerable success in the aircraft industry and drove the decision to buy fighter aircraft from the UK for both military and economic reasons. Through that deal Indonesia gained the favor of the

British official who certified the airworthiness of the Indonesian made CN235 commercial transport<sup>35</sup>. This certification also obtained a niche for the plane's export to the US. Indonesia's purchase of F-16s from the US is also accompanied by an off-set program in which Indonesia would locally manufacture some of the F-16 parts.

The success stories of Singapore and Indonesia have led other ASEAN countries to develop their own defense industries. Joining the pack is Malaysia. Her defense industry produces mainly small arms ammunition and AUG Styer assault rifles under license. Recently, she has also entered a joint venture project with Australia to build 39 Off-shore Patrol Vessels for the Malaysian Navy, thus opening an opportunity for an export-oriented ship-building industry. Malaysia has also entered an agreement with Germany, France and Russia in the manufacture of light aircraft and other aerospace technology.

The dark side of the "off-set" program however, is the effect on suppliers, including the US. Many critics are against the idea and their apprehensions are well founded. For example, as part of the arms deal US exporters must spend money in the purchasing country, either for the manufacture of weapon parts or at times even to buy non military goods to be sold in

the US. This could result in layoffs of workers in other industries.<sup>36</sup>

Off-set programs may also be corrupted by bribery.<sup>37</sup> Arms acquisitions are known to be replete with suspicions of actual bribery. In the Philippines for example, Senator Orlando Mercado, Chairman of the Senate Defense Committee of the Philippines in his efforts to clean-up what seemed to be corruption and bribery, stumbled on \$163 millions in payments being made for non-existing equipment.<sup>38</sup>

**BUYERS MARKET.** Weapons acquisitions among the ASEAN countries are also strongly influenced by a "buyers market" which currently prevails throughout the world. The sharp decline of demand for weapons in the US, Europe and Russia has forced the defense industries to more aggressively export in order to survive the defense budget cut.<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, suppliers from both the West and the East have dumped surplus weapons abroad to ensure survival of the domestic industries and to prevent massive lay-offs.<sup>40</sup> To boost the defense industry and prevent unemployment of thousands of Americans, the Clinton Administration for example has explicitly stated that domestic needs are one of the criteria for an arms deal.<sup>41</sup>

With thousands of defense workers laid-off in the US<sup>42</sup>, the UK<sup>43</sup> and Russia the competition for buyers become more intense with increasingly attractive incentives being afforded.<sup>44</sup> The U.S. has intensified her sales efforts by using the Pentagon to sponsor sales to 86 nations around the world. Even U.S. embassies are involved to increase sales.<sup>45</sup> In 1993 alone the U.S. clinched arms transfer agreements worth \$22.3 billion as compared to a mere \$2.8 billion worth of sales by Russia.<sup>46</sup> The US currently has a 70 per cent share of world sales in the Asia Pacific region, the biggest weapon market in the world which translates to \$310 billions sales.

The buyers on the other hand, have a field-day getting the best deal. For example, Malaysia decided to purchase 18 MiG 29s aircraft from Russian because they were cheaper than those from the West. The sales also included transfer of technology in the aerospace industry.<sup>47</sup> Through another deal the Malaysia clinched a good deal for the 8 FA-18s with advanced avionics from the U.S. Indonesia's purchase of warships from the former East German Navy has transpired for similar reasons too.

**POLITICAL IMPERATIVES.** Another significant political influence on the ASEAN arms race was the promulgations

of the United Nations Convention Law of the Sea 1982, better known as UNCLOS 1882. The law added 200 nautical miles to Exclusive Economic Zones, a law regarded as a windfall to ASEAN nations who can now claim thousands of square miles of the South China Sea which is known to be resource-rich in oil, gas, fish and other minerals. The law however, raises a number of problems which arises from conflicting claims as a result of unclear delineations between countries. In many cases the boundaries overlap. What is even worse, is that the UNCLOS 1982 does not cover the provisions of how conflicting claims over delineations should be resolved.

To take one example, there seems to be little chance of resolving the conflicting claims in the Spratlys because the basis for the claims stems from different sources.<sup>48</sup> China bases her claim on historical ground; Vietnam claims the area as part of former French possession; Taiwan's claim is similar to China's. She occupied Atu Batu, one of the islands in the Spratlys, after the Japanese occupations of World War II. The Philippines' claim is based on both historical and literal "ground"; the islands are part of her continental shelf. Malaysia and the Brunei on the other hand, base their claims on UNCLOS 1982. The Spratly issue will be a compelling influence on

modernization of the Armed Forces from the contending countries of Malaysia, Brunei, Philippines and Vietnam regarding their response to China in asserting their rightful claims over parts of the Spratly islands.

The conflicting claims in the Spratly has to be addressed urgently based on peaceful solutions. All parties must enter an agreement that the threat or the use of force will not be used to resolve conflicting claims in the Spratlys. This is necessary to eliminate the uncertainties which are main reasons compelling the claimants to acquire more sophisticated weapons and deploy their Armed Forces in the Spratly regions in support of their claims. This trend will lead to a self-fulfilling arms race and increased possibility of armed conflicts, unless there is a mechanism to prevent it from happening.<sup>49</sup>

**External Defense.** Maritime interests in the South China Sea continue to dominate the political, economic and military interests of ASEAN countries. The interplay of these interests translate to the requirement of having sufficient maritime and air forces to protect large expanses of areas. The modernization of the naval and air force of Malaysia for example, has been mainly for the protection of her oil rigs and other national resources predominantly

offshore installations. Other maritime nations like Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines and Brunei, whose economies depend on resources from the offshore areas and secured sea lines of communications, have likewise modernized their Armed Forces with emphasis on maritime and air capabilities.

The shift from that of internal to external defense with considerable strike capabilities has not only unbalanced the military power in the region, but it has also impinged on the self defence capability of neighboring countries as they find themselves inadequately armed compared to their neighbors. The resulting counter acquisitions of military force is amply demonstrated among ASEAN countries whereby each country responded by "catching up" to make good when it perceives its Armed Forces have been relegated to the second tier or being "out-classed" by her neighbors.

Another negative aspect of weapons acquisition is that the consequent counter-acquisitions and the self-fulfilling arms race divert large amount of national resources. Further, the arms race heightens tensions among countries especially where strained relationships already existed. This phenomenon proved to have disruptive effect among ASEAN given the unresolved territorial disputes between them.<sup>50</sup>

Another influence that has triggered weapons acquisitions has been the necessity to replace old equipment. Countries like Malaysia, Indonesia Thailand and Philippines modernized their armed forces to replace those weapon systems bought in the 1960s and 1970s. These acquisitions have been timed to meet the new challenges in the 1990s which call for a shift in military doctrine and force structure. The acquisitions are therefore welcomed by the Armed Forces of the countries of ASEAN, first, because they share common desires to replace old weapons and, secondly, to be more efficient to face different challenges because of the changing environment.

**New Roles.** Increased roles of the Armed Forces among the ASEAN countries to secure EEZ and reap economic potentials are placed high on their national agenda. This translates to the keen investments in the form of acquisition of new weapon systems and the restructure of organizations. Increased areas of responsibilities and tasks for the Armed forces have profound impact on military strategy and doctrine which in turn has direct consequences on force modernization, and arms acquisition. Further, uncertainties in the regions, as a result of superpower withdrawal and the newly emerging regional powers like China and India seeking

to occupy the void, have also hastened ASEAN to defend themselves.<sup>51</sup> Modernization of the Armed Forces are undertaken in response to the prevailing uncertainties to attain their military capabilities vis-a-vis the doctrine adopted in support of their national defenses. Again, this is achieved through arms acquisitions and complemented by domestic defense industries. <sup>52</sup>

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Arms acquisitions are inter-related to various influences at the international, regional and national level. Hence, interplay of political, economic, technological and military interests vis-a-vis roles of the Armed Forces will continue to compound and greatly increased economic, military, diplomatic and political tensions among the ASEAN countries with the corresponding effect of eroding ASEAN solidarity and resilience. Weapon surpluses at the international level lead to stiff competitions among the weapon suppliers from both West and East. This lead to suppliers offering better incentives and create "buyers market". The ASEAN nations, in the midst of modernization of their Armed Forces have taken the opportunity to replace old weapons with more sophisticated weapon systems needed for the dual track strategy of deterrence and confidence building.

The newly acquired weapon systems with strike capabilities however destabilize the military balance in the South East Asia region. This leads to counter acquisitions by the neighboring countries because they perceive them as a threat. The keen competition among ASEAN in the purchases of arms and the development of defense industries for self-reliance in the supplies of military hardware, has a compelling impact on ASEAN countries to "catch-up" with their neighbors. This in fact is an arms race - in different terms. In turn, arms acquisitions compounded further tensions in ASEAN relationship that are already fraught with suspicion and distrust arising from conflicting issues such as unresolved territorial boundaries and overlapping claims, as in the case of Spratlys.

ASEAN has successfully dampened conflict issues as they surface and before they erupt. Conflict issues are controlled by mechanisms such as the habit of consultations, meetings between staff and officials, joint projects, by avoiding raising sensitive issues and forums with the aim of maintaining cooperations at all levels.

Further, the ASEAN Accord of 1976 manifests the desire to keep ASEAN from drifting apart, eroding its resilience and the political clout it now possesses. The Accord calls for strengthening political

solidarity, coordination of positions such that all decisions and any action is taken only with consensus thus reflecting ASEAN as an entity. At the same time the Accord ensures respect for sovereignty and non interference. It renounces threats and the use of threats and advocates the settlement of conflicting issues through peaceful means. ASEAN has religiously abided by the spirit of the Accord to the extent it would discuss issues considered as domestic, in order to avoid sensitivities among member countries. Indeed the survival of ASEAN has been the ability to refrain from aggravating such issues.

ASEAN which was formed in 1967 for economic, social and political objectives avoided any form of military commitment during the Cold War for obvious reason --to avoid as being aligned with a particular superpower. In reality however, most of the ASEAN countries except for her latest member, Vietnam, were and still are aligned to the West. The formation of the ASEAN Regional Forum in 1994 as a security forum, has been an unprecedented move on the part of ASEAN. This could have been the realization of the advantages of such a forum for political and economic clout to ensure ASEAN continue playing a relevant role in the stability of the region. However, there are insurmountable obstacles that have to be overcome

before it could evolve to a security community like NATO. In the first place, ASEAN nations have to overcome religious, cultural, ethnic and political differences that exist among them. Other problems such as unresolved territorial issues, illegal immigrants, borders crossings, economic competitions and finally arms acquisitions need urgent attention to avoid the disruptive outcome.

ASEAN is able to avoid such disruption by taking full advantage of the forces of integrations such as joint economic projects, Joint Border Committees, Anti-Piracy and other committees involving government agencies and the private sectors engaged in discussions on matters of common interests. This trend will continue unabated in the foreseeable future against the strong current that impedes the possible development of ASEAN into as a Security Community. And, the unilateral arms acquisitions will continue to be a major impediment.

**Notes**

1. J.N Mark "ASEAN Maritime Insecurity: Contingency Planning In Uncertain World." International Defense Review-Defence 1995 In this article, he cited differences in perceptions among ASEAN members. For example Malaysia and Indonesia had always considered China as threatening. Only in 1992 Indonesia resumed official relationship with China. It was later followed by Singapore and Brunei. In 1992 ASEAN have close and cordial relationship with China.
2. SIPRI 1994, pg 134. The 1976 Concord was to avoid reviving intra-ASEAN territorial disputes and prevent exposing weaknesses and differences among them.
3. Stephen Ryan, "The Pacific Century-Will The New Century BE As Dangerous As The Last?" Asian Defence Journal 3/94 pp 62. He argues ASEAN has the attributes of security community because it has engaged in several decades of consultations, compromises and consensus building all of which are attributes for a successful security community.
4. Wilfred A Homan "Conflict Potential in Southeast Asia." Military Technology August 1995 pp 8. Accordingly, he describes the problems of border between Malaysia and Thailand and how Thailand even perceives Malaysia as a source of threat.
5. ASEAN PMC was formed in 1977 and formalized in July 1993 at the head of state summit as a forum for security dialogue. The Post Ministerial Council (PMC) consist of 7 members of ASEAN the dialogue partners: Australia, Canada, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, the US and the European Community. It evolved from the Southeast Asia Association for Regional Cooperations (SEAARC) proposed by Thailand in 1966. ASEAN was initially designed to provide collective security for its members by granting them leverage after the British and later American withdrawal from SEA. The PMC was convened to pressure Japan and other developed states to allow greater assistance for ASEAN joint development projects. By mid 1980s it developed as forum for security dialogue.
6. ASEAN Regional Forum. Members consist of 7 ASEAN countries, US, Canada, Japan, European Community, Australia, South Korea and observers from China, Russia and Laos.
7. Zakaria Haji Ahmad and Razak Baginda "Southeast Asia and Pacific Regional Security." Military Technology.MILTECH April 1994 pp 10.

8. J.N Mark "ASEAN Maritime Insecurity: Contingency Planning In An Uncertain World." International Defence Review-Defence 1995 pp 62. The author argues that the current defence acquisitions is regarded as an arms race because defence planning by each country is based on contingencies against neighbors.
9. Forecast International/DMS Market Intelligence Report Asia & Pacific Rim Market Overview 1995- Indonesia pp 8.
10. Forecast International Market Intelligence Report-Indonesia pp 8.
11. SIPRI 1994 pp 552.
12. Forecast International/DMS Market Intelligence Report Asia Pacific & Rim Market Overview - Singapore pp 1.
13. Brian Cloughley "ASEAN At Arms" International Defence Review 12/1995 pp 22.
14. SIPRI 1994 pp 558.
15. op cit Forecast International - Singapore pp 1.
16. ibid Forecast International-Singapore. pp 1.
17. ibid Forecast International Market Intelligence Report Malaysia pp 9.
18. ibid pp 4.
19. ibid pp 1.
20. ibid pg 8
21. ibid pp 8.
22. ibid Forecast International Thailand pp 4.
23. op cit Brian Cloughley pp 33.
24. op cit B Cloughley. He explains that Brunei has powerful friend and need not worry about her defense.
25. ibid Brian Cloughley pp 22.
26. -- "Asian Security 1994 - 1995" Research Institute For Peace & Security- Tokyo pp 18

27. Micheal Richardson "Breaking Down The Asian Barriers." Asia Pacific Defence Reporter September 1990 pp 24. He cited that the prime reasons for conflicts arise from rivalries that their root causes in historical animosities, racial and religious divisions or competitions for influence and resources. This would not disappear but will continue into the future.
28. op cit J.N Mark also cited the contingency planning also stimulate acquisition and counter acquisitions.
29. Michael Mandelbaum "United States and the Strategic Quadrangle" The Strategic Quadrangle Russia, China Japan and the United States In The Far East pp 161. He described the effect of "spiral model" as one country that relies on herself alone for defense tend to acquire a higher force level than her counterpart only to lead to greater political tensions. In short her defensive actions only to appear as aggressive to the other party. In turn it compels the later to respond in kind - again for defensive reason but the other interprets as offensive. And a spiral of measures, counter-measures and mounting distrust unfolds.
30. Wilfried A Herrmann "Conflict Potentials In Southeast Asia." Military Technology.MILTECH August 1995 pp 13. There are several sources of potential conflicts as a results from borders drawn in colonial times involving Malaysia with all her neighbors Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines (the last two not explicitly indicated).
31. Bates Gill "Arms Acquisition in East Asia," SUPRA Yearbook 1994, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Oxford University Press 1994, pp 557.
32. -- INKS Strategic Assessment 1995 US Security Challenges in Transition pp 20. Between 1985 and 1992 nations with the highest rates of economic growth showed the largest increase of defense spending.
33. -- "Asian Security 1994" Research Institute For Peace & Security- Tokyo pp 17 - 18.
34. Michael T Clair "Next Great Arms Race." Foreign Affairs Summer 1993 pp 145. The author discussed "off set" agreement entails transfer of military technology from supplier to government as part of the local government investment for military R&D and productions.
35. Forecast International Market Overview - Indonesia pp 9.

36. -- "Cut Foreign Arms Sales" Bulletin Of Atomic Scientist pp 48. The article cited a study made by the World Policy Institution.

37. M Thompson "Going Up, Up In Arms." Time Dec 12 1994 pp 48.

38. Forecast International Analysis pp 2.

39. Mary H Copper "Arms Sales" CO Research Dec 9 1994 pp 1083.

40. Stephen Ryan "The Pacific Century- Will The New Century Be As Dangerous As the Last?" Asian Defence Journal 3/94 pp 67.

41. Mary H Cooper pp 1085.

42. Mary H Cooper in her article "Arms Sales" stated more than 600,000 employees in USA were laid off since 1990. In 1993 a further 160,000 lost their job.

43. -- Economist Jul 23 1994 pp 58, In one article it described the decline of defense industries in UK causing 180,000 employees lost their job from 1981 - 1992. Since 1992 another 20,000 to 30,000 employees were laid-off. Accordingly, UK depends more on defense industry than any other European country. She exports one quarter of her arms to the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

44. op cit Stephen Ryan pp 67.

45. op cit Mark Thomson pp 47.

46. op cit Mark Thomsom pp 47.

47. Igor Khripunov "Conventional Arms Control Initiatives: Russia a Special Case." Arms Control Today December, 1994 pp 13.

48. INKS 1995 pp 30. Nations have difficulty to agree on specific agenda for consideration by multi forum. In the case of Spratly, China is not willing to have any negotiations involving multilateral arrangement.

49. RI for Peace and Security Tokyo Asian Security 1994 - 1995 pp 17-18. Territorial disputes tends to be mutually reinforcing uncertainties which in turn induce countries to be more assertive on their territorial claims and as claims mount so does uncertainty creating a self-fulfilling cycle of arms acquisitions and counter arms acquisitions thus an arms race.

50. For example Malaysia has unresolved territorial issues with all the countries of ASEAN except Vietnam.

51. op cit INKS 1995 pg 21. Most are concerned with the diminishing presence of the US in the region and have adopted contingencies to be more self-sufficient Armed Forces.
52. -- "Asian Security 1994", Research Institute of Peace & Security - Tokyo pp 17 - 18.

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